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Okla Folklore

Mystery and Romance In Old Diggings

Devil's Canyon, Wichita Mountains, Bears Old Legends of Spaniards.

Mystery, romance, tragedy.

They lurk in Devil's canyon, a deep gorge among the Wichita mountains, 5 miles from Hobart.

Remains of what was once a village, inhabited, according to legend among the Kiowa Indians, by Spaniards who worked rich mines in the mountains more than 100 years ago, still are visible.

Many years ago when Olin M. Talley of Hobart was a boy in the Wichita mountains, he used to visit the ruins of the village and he knew the legend which brought scores of treasure seekers to the place.

The Talley home was not many miles from Devil's canyon and became a place of refuge for prospectors who went into the mountains and staked their all in hopes of finding buried treasure, only to return penniless and hungry. They were given food at the Talley home, then departed on their way back to civilization, broken in spirit because they had not found the hidden gold of the Kiowa legend.

The legend is not unlike others told in old mining districts over a greater part of the west. They involve hidden treasure, Spaniards and Indians. In almost every such case the Spaniards were working rich mines when set upon by the Indians and killed and then the Indians, not knowing what to do with the bullion, buried it.

In the Devil's canyon legend, there is something more than rumor. There is the fact of a village once existing among the mountains.

Talley, in reminiscing, said that he remembers the place distinctly.

"There apparently was a street, for there are two rows of dugouts with timbers still sticking above the ground. The timbers were substantial and were clear. No white man in the country then rembered when the village existed," Talley said.

"Near the village were numerous springs of water and up the side of the mountain, there is a cave," Talley declared, "where several hundred tons of ashes were found. The cave is thought to have been the smelter where the Spaniards extracted the gold."

The legend handed down by the Kiowas is that many, many years ago, the Indians came upon the village of Spaniards, who were there working the mine and after robbing and looting the houses or dugouts, they killed and scalped the Spaniarls. There were fifty burro loads of gold bullion taken from the miners, says the legend, and hidden by the Indians. No one but the chiefs of the tribe knew where it was hidden and no member of the tribe except when he is a chief, has been allowed to know where the bullion was hidden, according to what the Kiowas told Talley.

It has been almost four decades since the legend attracted much attention. Talley said when he was a boy scores of fortune seekers came to the mountains and went away disappointed. The mountain at that time was covered with holes where fortune seekers had dug for the treasure, he said.

Records in San Fernando cathedral at San Antonio show that the Spaniards from both San Antonio and Santa Fe worked valuable mines in the mountains of this territory early in the seventeenth century.

The gold was taken to San Antonio or Santa Fe and both of those ancient towns were famous in early history for their gold bullion brought in by Spaniards.